

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 6, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

As you continue negotiations with Senate leadership on the next legislative package to address the unprecedented health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to reiterate the importance of continuing to support students and higher education institutions as they prepare for the fall semester. As you discuss measures to bolster the economy and protect the middle class, please consider the essential role colleges and universities may have in our nation's recovery by training the next generation of American workers and maintaining our global leadership in research and innovation. With that in mind, we request the following considerations for colleges and universities, and their students:

- **Strong Investment in Higher Education** – While we appreciate that both the HEROES Act and the HEALS Act included dedicated funding for higher education, the appropriations levels included in these bills do not go far enough to meet the current needs to support student learning into the next academic year. Initial projections estimated the financial impact to students and higher education institutions would amount to \$46.6 billion to weather the public health crisis. Unfortunately, the spread of COVID-19 and its associated impacts have subsequently led to continued increase in the financial impacts on students and institutions of higher education which necessitates a stronger investment from Congress. Students and their families are facing economic hardship and have increasing financial aid needs, while higher education institutions continue to face increased operational costs in order to keep their students and communities safe. As you consider future federal aid legislation to respond to COVID-19, we request the inclusion of the strongest possible funding for students and higher education.
- **Use of the Existing Distribution Framework** – To ensure that the funds can rapidly be deployed to meet the immediate needs, we recommend that the legislation use the existing Department of Education mechanisms to distribute funds directly to institutions. This will ensure that funds reach campuses as quickly as possible where critical financial aid can be quickly disbursed to assist students in meeting expenses for the upcoming academic year.
- **Broad Student Eligibility** – As many students and their families are struggling with financial hardship as a result of the rapidly changing economic conditions, we must take

into consideration the importance of deploying student aid more broadly to help ensure our nation can continue to compete globally by investing in a highly-skilled workforce. We must continue to acknowledge the importance of extending relief to support and train students of all ages and with diverse backgrounds, so that they do not derail their plans in pursuit of higher education. As in the CARES Act, we anticipate that a portion of the higher education funding will be made available to students as subawarded grants to help offset expenses directly related to coronavirus disruption and keep students on track towards graduation and entry into the workforce. To ensure financial relief reaches more students, we request the negotiated package include clarifying language similar to that in the HEROES Act to broaden the Department of Education's narrow interpretation of student eligibility provisions that were narrowly tailored during implementation of the CARES Act, which prevented many students in need of relief from accessing necessary support.

- **Flexibility to Adapt to Unique Circumstances** – In order to ensure that colleges and universities are able to respond to their individual needs and that of their students, we request that institutions are provided broad flexibility to the allowable uses of institutional funds. Each institution faces a unique situation determined by the level of spread in their broader communities and may have to adjust operations as the pandemic continues. These funds will allow colleges and universities to take a variety of measures including awarding additional financial assistance to keep students enrolled, making necessary infrastructure improvements, purchasing additional cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment to ensure a safe campus environment, or increase the use of technology to increase distanced-learning options. Sufficient flexibility will allow colleges and universities to quickly respond to sudden changes in circumstances due to COVID-19 and continue safe execution of their higher education missions. We are pleased that both the HEROES Act and the HEALS act allow institutions to direct funding to where it is needed most.
- **Student Loan Relief** – Given the financial burdens student borrowers are currently facing due to the economic effects from the pandemic, we recommend that future supplemental relief legislation provide for an extension of the suspension of payments and interest on federal student loans. This critical financial relief will soon expire on September 30, 2020. Language similar to that in the HEROES Act would extend the student loan relief originally provided in the CARES Act for an additional year and protect Americans who are early in their careers and especially vulnerable to difficult economic conditions.
- **Maintenance of Effort** – Recognizing that the states play an important role in supporting institutions of higher education, we are pleased that both the HEROES Act and the HEALS Act included language to reinforce that federal funds should not be used as a means to replace state funding to their higher education budgets. We request inclusion of similar language to ensure that states minimize budget cuts and continue to invest in these critical institutions throughout the pandemic and associated economic recovery.

The inclusion of these provisions in a negotiated supplemental legislative package will ensure that universities and colleges can continue to do their part in the fight COVID-19 while providing continued educational offerings for American students to build the foundation for a strong economic recovery.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our request to continue support for institutions of higher education and their students.

Sincerely,



DANIEL W. LIPINSKI
Member of Congress

SUSAN W. BROOKS
Member of Congress

MADELEINE DEAN
Member of Congress

JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress

CHERI BUSTOS
Member of Congress

SUSAN K. DELBENE
Member of Congress

SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress

MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress

THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Member of Congress

BRIAN FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress

JOSH GOTTHEIMER
Member of Congress

JIM COOPER
Member of Congress

DAVID TRONE
Member of Congress

BRENDAN F. BOYLE
Member of Congress

ELISSA SLOTKIN
Member of Congress

JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress

JASON CROW
Member of Congress

BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress

MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress

DENNY HECK
Member of Congress

GRACE NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

MARY GAY SCANLON
Member of Congress

JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

NORMA J. TORRES
Member of Congress

DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress

JOHN YARMUTH
Member of Congress

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress